

Health Talk 0005 “Rabies”

Announcer: Welcome to “Health Talk”, where you’ll find “Good Advice for Good Health!” Now, here are Ty and Paula with today’s topic.

T: Hi there!

P: Today on Health Talk, we’re talking about Rabies.

T: Rabies is a disease caused by a virus. There are lots of viruses which get into our bodies, but the rabies virus is especially dangerous. If the rabies virus goes into our body, it gets into the nerves and moves towards the brain at about seven centimetres a day. If the virus reaches the brain, there is no treatment and you will die. Rabies is fatal if we don’t get treatment for it.

P: The rabies virus is carried by mammals, like dogs, cats, foxes, bats and people. The rabies virus is spread between mammals through contact with infected saliva, or spit. Saliva is passed between mammals primarily through being bitten by an infected animal. So, for example, a dog can bite a person and infect that person with rabies, and while they are sick, somebody else could get their saliva in their eye, mouth or in an open wound, and then that person could get rabies too.

T: The most common carriers of rabies are dogs. To avoid being bitten, keep well away from dogs, especially when they are in packs, as they are more aggressive then. Also keep away from wild animals and do not have them as pets, even if they seem friendly. A rabid animal sometimes acts tame. They could be a rabies threat to you and your animals. The best way to stop rabies from spreading to humans is by staying away from strange animals, and keeping pets properly vaccinated where possible.

P: You can't always tell if a dog has rabies. It may look normal, but might act a little irritable. As it gets sicker though, the muscles in its throat don't work, so it can't eat or drink. It can't even swallow its own saliva, so the saliva runs out of its mouth and the dog looks like it is drooling or foaming at the mouth. This is when an infected dog is most dangerous because it feels as though someone is choking it, and it will try to bite anyone who gets near it.

T: Any animal that is suspected of having rabies should be killed. It is best if this is done by someone who's had a rabies vaccine so they don't get rabies. And then the animal should be examined to see if it really does have rabies, so that everyone who has been in contact with the animal can be vaccinated. Be careful...even the carcass and saliva of the dead animal are dangerous for hours, even days after the animal is dead.

P: All humans that are not treated will die if they get rabies. Occasionally, a dog will get rabies and not die from it. Dogs that get sick and then get better become carriers of the rabies virus. So, if at any time you are bitten by an animal you should get a rabies vaccine as soon as possible. Don't wait until the dog or other animal that bit you dies before you get a vaccination. By that time it may be too late, because if the dog that bit you is a carrier of the virus, it will survive but you could die from rabies.

T: If you are bitten by any animal, wash the wound thoroughly with soap and lots of water. This will lessen the chance of rabies infection. When you clean the bite wound, be careful not to infect anyone else. If you think the animal that bit you might have rabies, you need to get treatment and be vaccinated. You should wait no longer than 24 hours after being bitten to get a rabies vaccination.

Announcer: This has been "Health Talk," a production of HCJB Global Voice. For more "Good Advice for Good Health" stay tuned to this station, or log on to hcjbglobal.org.